

*We shouldn't have to wait to live our lives*



## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### 2000 Annual Report

A Division of the  
Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

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# Who We Are



The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is a division in the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. DVR's mission is to obtain, maintain and improve employment for people with disabilities by working with consumers, employers and other partners.

DVR focuses strongly on core values to help offer efficient, trustworthy rehabilitation for people with disabilities:

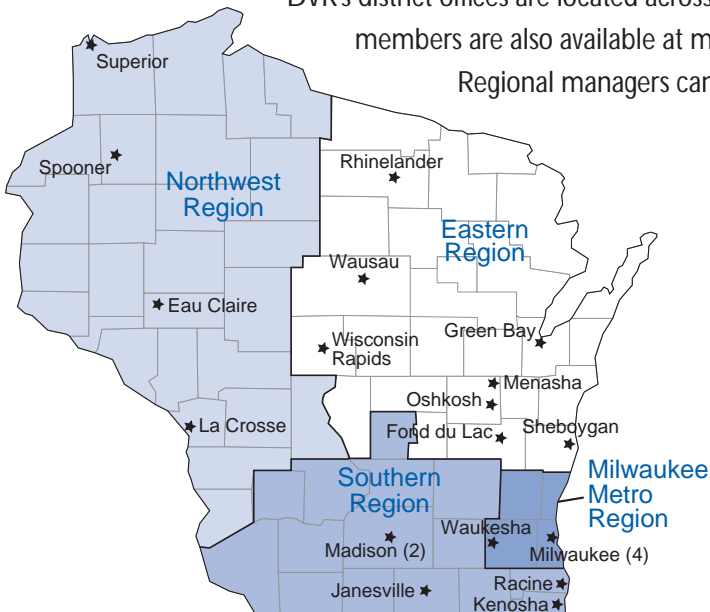
- Tell the truth.
- Keep your promises.
- Be fair.
- Respect the individual.
- Expect quality.

DVR's strategic priorities are:

- Employment outcomes.
- Consumer satisfaction.
- Quality of work life.
- Collaboration with partners.
- Fiscal management.
- Operational excellence.

## Locations

DVR's district offices are located across the state (see map below). DVR staff members are also available at many of Wisconsin's 76 Job Centers. Regional managers can be reached at the numbers below.



- Northwest Region  
608-243-5618
- Southern Region  
608-243-5614
- Eastern Region  
608-243-5613
- Milwaukee Metro Region  
608-243-5612

# *Making the journey*

## *Dear Friends:*

*How can one capture the extraordinary trip we experienced over the past two years? Not really possible, but I liken the trip to a whitewater-rafting excursion. It takes a long, cross-country drive with little sleep and lots of discomfort, though you strive to make it fun. When you hit the river, no matter how well you prepared and how good you are, the rapids can take you places you don't want to go.*

*But there's no going back on Whitewater River – the current is too strong. You have to raft it – endure the difficulties, enjoy the danger and look forward to a shower and a bed in the future. Remember, you'll look back one day, shake your head, laugh and cherish the memories with those who took the trip with you.*

*The outfitters for this trip are Department of Workforce Development Secretary Jennifer Reinert and Deputy Secretary Dick Wegner. With their leadership and support, we're anticipating a successful, smooth remainder of the trip. During it all, the constants in this journey have been our staff, our mission and our consumers.*

## *Staff*

*Our staff has met and exceeded every performance indicator of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, strived to serve consumers and provided the highest-quality vocational rehabilitation services.*

## *Mission*


*No public entity has a better success story to tell. Employment for people with disabilities is our ultimate goal. When people with disabilities get jobs, they gain independence – and we all benefit from the many contributions they make.*

## *Consumers*

*Our consumers face turbulent waters every day. They are the heroic people who stay afloat – they enlist our support, engage our services and go to work to become a wonderful part of the American workforce. And, they are the people who give us exceedingly high marks for satisfaction with services.*

*So, what is the story of Wisconsin Vocational Rehabilitation? We have developed an even greater commitment to excellence and a noble mission. We know we will succeed and grow even better, and we're not afraid to try to be the best public vocational rehabilitation program in the country. Why bother? Let someone else's words be the answer. When I asked Justin Dart, a leader in the fight for equality for people with disabilities, what he thought about order of selection and waiting lists, he looked at me with that remarkable spiritual quality he has and said, "In the richest country in the world, there is no reason that people should have to wait to live their lives."*

Amen.



Tom Dixon  
Administrator



*"In the richest country in the world,  
there is no reason that people  
should have to wait to live their lives."*

Justin Dart  
Leader in the fight for equality for people with disabilities

Claire Coleman was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis in 1976 when she was 11 months old. At that time, the life expectancy of someone with the disease was 13 years. Twenty-four years after her diagnosis, Claire, who grew up in Hazelhurst, near Minocqua, is doing well. DVR was part of the formula that led to her success.

Even with medical advancements that erased her 13-year life expectancy prediction, Claire's activities became more restricted as she grew older. Approaching high school graduation, her medical problems and the high cost of college made continuing her education seem impossible. Then, her doctor told her about DVR. Claire learned that DVR could provide advice and counseling about how to manage her physical limitation at school.

As valedictorian of her high school class, Claire did not need tuition assistance during her first four years of college. *(At each public high school in Wisconsin, the student graduating first in the class receives a scholarship that pays tuition at any University of Wisconsin campus).* She enrolled at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the industrial engineering program.

"Freshman year was overwhelming," Claire said. Along with the typical anxieties that come with the first year of college, Claire had to manage her cystic fibrosis. Finding housing close to campus was almost impossible, and traveling long distances to get to class was a strain on her health. During her first semester, Claire had to drop a class. The long walk to the class was not only damaging her health but also taking up too much of the time she needed to take care of herself. DVR purchased a scooter to help Claire get to classes more easily.



*"I wouldn't have been able to pay for my last year of school without DVR's help."*

Claire Coleman

Her disease progressed as she continued college. By 1998, Claire's lung capacity was less than 20% – she was on oxygen full time. After waiting nine months, a donor was found and Claire had a double-lung transplant. This meant she was not able to finish college in four years – and her scholarship ended after four years. DVR stepped in with tuition assistance. "I wouldn't have been able to pay for my last year of school without DVR's help," Claire said.

Claire graduated in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering. She now tests software quality at a company in Madison. Claire plans to stay in the software field and eventually work in development.

"Cystic fibrosis slowed and nearly stopped Claire at times, but she was determined not only to survive but to live fully," said Jim Walsh, Claire's DVR counselor.

Dennis Robinson said he wouldn't be farming today if DVR hadn't helped him. A farm injury left him unable to do many of things necessary to run his farm. "There's no way we could have done it on our own," Dennis said.

On a sunny summer day, Dennis was bringing in the last load of hay from a field on his farm near Prairie Farm, about an hour outside of Eau Claire. He was in a hurry. "I did a dumb thing," Dennis said. The apron on his chopper box broke. The apron pushes the hay into the augers of the chopper box. Dennis used a pitchfork to push the hay toward the augers at the front of the box. In a split second, Dennis' sweater got caught in the augers and he was pulled, head first, into the chopper box. Dennis said he remembers telling God that he didn't want to die. What happened next Dennis calls his miracle. The drive chains that power the augers broke, and the augers stopped. Dennis was able to free himself and call for help. His 17-year-old son, John, heard his father and called 911 from their barn.

Dennis' injuries were severe. The augers had torn the muscle from his left shoulder and made deep cuts down the right side of his body and on his right arm. The most serious injuries were to his stomach. Most of the muscles on the left side of his stomach had been torn, leaving his organs exposed. Dennis remained in the hospital for a month, and then recovered for several months at home.

When Dennis returned to his farm, he wasn't able to do many of the chores he had before. He couldn't lift his arm – limiting shoveling and many other activities. "You don't realize how much you use your stomach muscles until you don't have any," Dennis said.

An article about the Robinsons in *Country Today* caught the attention of AgrAbility, a statewide program that provides services to farmers and their families dealing with disabilities. AgrAbility is co-sponsored by the Easter Seal Society of



*"There's no way we could have done it on our own."*

*Dennis Robinson*

Wisconsin and the UW-Cooperative Extension Service. AgrAbility staff recommended the Robinsons modify their farm. They led them to Sue Olson, a DVR counselor in Rice Lake. "Because of Sue's help and encouragement, we could keep farming," Dennis' wife Peggy said.

DVR helped the Robinsons modify their farm. They added an automatic feed cart to eliminate shoveling feed and a loader for feed and heavy items. DVR also helped cover expenses for making the barn more accessible and easier to clean. This was a joint effort, according to Sue Olson. DVR worked closely with partners at AgrAbility and the UW-Stout Assistive Technology and Assessment Center.

When Jason Rodriguez was growing up, he wanted to be a police officer. That dream began to change when he heard his older brother, a firefighter, talking about his work.

Jason enrolled in the Fire Academy for the City of Milwaukee. Three weeks into his training, he fell three stories from a training tower, crushed his skull and fractured his spine. He was in the hospital for almost a month.

While Jason was in the hospital, his mother heard about DVR from one of his doctors. DVR counselor Larry Schultz came to the hospital to meet with Jason.

Because of a traumatic brain injury from his fall, Jason has a learning disability. After the accident, Jason said, "I didn't want to admit that anything was wrong." Larry helped him work through some of his denial, but Jason said he knows his counselor had an uphill battle with him. "I was stubborn," Jason said.

Larry helped Jason get in contact with the services he needed. While Jason was waiting to re-enter the Fire Academy, he took classes toward a fire science degree at Milwaukee Area Technical College. DVR helped him find and pay for tutors and other things to help him study. "DVR helped me make the right connections," Jason said.

Jason re-entered the Fire Academy and graduated in June 2000. He is now working as a firefighter for the City of Milwaukee. Larry said he has



*"Without DVR, I wouldn't have had the help I needed. They're a 'must have' for people with disabilities."*

Jason Rodriguez

confidence in Jason's future as a firefighter. "He has the drive, determination and the personality to accomplish anything he sets his mind to."

"Without DVR, I wouldn't have had the help I needed," Jason said. "They're a 'must have' for people with disabilities."

For Wendy Lippert of Watertown, DVR provided the support she needed to gain confidence in her abilities. "DVR was my cheerleader," she said.

In the 1980s, Wendy began losing her hearing as the result of an illness. She lost her job as a receptionist when her hearing loss affected her ability to answer the phone. She decided to use the time to go back to school.

During her first semester at UW-Waukesha, Wendy heard about DVR. After visiting her local office, she was assigned to DVR counselor Sandy Ellsworth. After taking some general classes, Wendy decided to pursue occupational therapy and transferred to Mount Mary College in Milwaukee. DVR assisted Wendy with tuition and mileage expenses and also helped her understand and accept her disability. Part of this process for Wendy was visiting a speech and hearing clinic. "They got me to accept what was happening," she said.

After graduation and a successful placement at a nearby hospital, Wendy's DVR case was closed. After several unsuccessful employment experiences and the progression of her hearing loss, Wendy found herself in need of DVR services again. She was referred to the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing where she worked with a counselor to: 1) make contacts with employers, 2) get help dealing with anger and frustration over the progression of her hearing loss, and 3) learn sign language.

DVR also helped educate Wendy about the services available to her and her rights as a person with a disability. By working with DVR and other agencies, Wendy finally realized there are people who understand what she's going through.



*"DVR was my cheerleader."*

*Wendy Lippert*

Through Wendy's contacts with employers, she found a job as an occupational therapist with Beverly Health Care in Watertown. "I've found a company that is absolutely wonderful," Wendy said. "The people I work with are great."

"The love and care that Wendy has for our patients is outstanding," said Carl Hoeppner, Wendy's co-worker. "They really appreciate the work she does."

Wendy's case is a good example of positive things that can happen when there is collaboration to help a consumer reach an employment goal, according to Sandy. Along with DVR, Wendy's support team included the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Project Success, a caring employer and her family.

Mike Reece has cerebral palsy. Fortunately, Pathways to Independence provided the support he needed to pursue his goals and find a job.

Pathways to Independence is a partnership between DVR and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. The program helps people with severe disabilities find employment – without risking essential support services they receive.

In 1996, Mike contacted Employment Resources, Inc. (ERI), a private, non-profit organization that works to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. ERI staff referred Mike to DVR as a participant for Pathways to Independence. Jacqueline Nordbo was the counselor who worked with Mike.

“He is an absolutely wonderful, charismatic person,” Jacqueline said. “Mike is very motivated and was the leader of his rehabilitation team throughout his involvement with our agency.”

Mike was interested in accounting. With the help of DVR, he was able to attend Madison Area Technical College where he earned a degree in accounting. DVR provided tuition assistance, helped find attendant care for Mike while he was at class and assistive technology that made it possible for him to participate in the accounting program.

Mike went on to complete an internship at Wegner LLP, an accounting firm in Madison.



*“The people are great  
and very supportive.”*

Mike Reece

He then returned to ERI – but this time as an employee. Mike currently works as an accounting assistant. He began working about 15 hours per week and now works about 35 hours per week. He also receives benefits.

“I like it a lot – the people are great and very supportive,” Mike said. “It’s rewarding to work for an employer who assists people with disabilities.”

## Compliance with Rehabilitation Services Administration Performance Standards and Indicators

	Target	FFY00
<b>1.1 Individuals achieving an employment outcome</b>		<b>4,610</b>
Number closed ineligible	Increase over previous year	4,070
Number closed from OOS waiting list		399
Number closed eligible, before plan (IPE)		3,430
Number closed during planned services		3,150
<b>1.2 Percent of all receiving services who achieved an employment outcome</b>	<b>55.8%</b>	<b>59.4%</b>
<b>1.3 Percent of all achieving employment outcome in competitive, self or BEP at or above minimum wage</b>	<b>72.6%</b>	<b>95.3%</b>
Competitive, self or BEP outcomes at or above minimum wage		3,954
All competitive, self or BEP outcomes		4,149
Applicable federal minimum wage		\$5.15
<b>1.4 Percent of 1.3 with significant disabilities</b>	<b>62.4%</b>	<b>86.2%</b>
No. of 1.3 with significant disabilities		3,409
<b>1.5 Avg. hourly earnings of those in 1.3 divided by state avg. hourly earnings</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.57</b>
Total weekly wages for those in 1.3		\$1,246,190
Total weekly hours for those in 1.3		131,339
Avg. hourly wage for those in 1.3		\$ 9.49
Avg. annualized earnings for those in 1.3		\$ 16,389
Wisconsin avg. annual pay (BLS for 1996 – 98)		\$ 28,542
<b>1.6 Of those in 1.3, percent with own income as primary source of support: exit minus entry</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.58</b>
Those in 1.3 with own income as primary source of support: Application		803
Those in 1.3 with own income as primary source of support: Closure		3,079

*Standard One:  
Employment  
Outcomes*  
A designated state unit (DSU – in Wisconsin, DVR) shall assist any eligible individual – including an individual with a significant disability – to obtain, maintain or regain high-quality employment.

<b>2.1 Service rate for minorities divided by service rate for non-minorities</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.82</b>
Minority exiters		2,564
Non-minority exiters		11,227
Minority exiters: received services		1,228
Non-minority exiters: received services		6,525

*Standard Two:  
Equal Access to Service.*  
A DSU shall ensure that individuals from minority backgrounds have equal access to vocational rehabilitation services.

### Everyone Wins With DVR (FFY 1996 - 2000)

Earnings of Wisconsin DVR Consumers	\$ 737,750,108
All Taxes Paid (federal and state income tax and other state taxes)	+ 110,514,404
	\$ 848,264,512
Social Security Reimbursements to Wisconsin	+ 8,085,593
	\$ 856,350,105
Public Assistance Reduction	+ 64,363,956
	\$ 920,714,061
DVR Program Costs	- 297,944,988
Cost Savings	\$ 622,769,073



All figures represent FFY 1996 - 2000 and are cumulative. They are based on the assumption that 25% of rehabilitated consumers will not be working during the second year and another 25% will not be working after the third year.

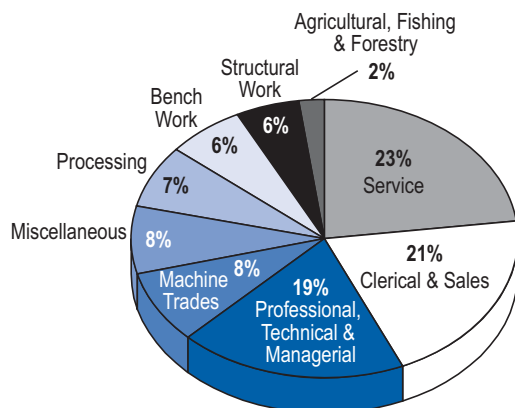
### Employment Outcomes (FFY 2000)

	# of Individuals		Hourly Wage
Wage or Salaried Worker	3,811	83%	\$ 9.58
Self-Employed	143	3%	7.51
Supported Employee	451	10%	6.16
Business Enterprise Program	5	0%	7.84
Homemaker	199	4%	—
Total	4,609	100%	—



\$8.85 was the average hourly wage earned by DVR consumers in 2000.

### Types of Jobs Obtained by DVR Consumers (FFY 2000)



4,610 DVR consumers obtained jobs in 2000.

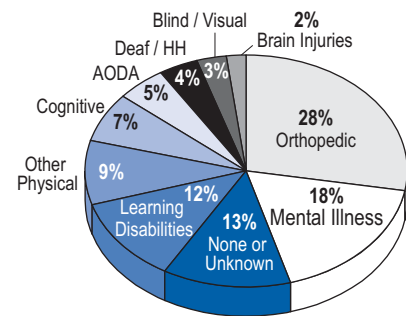
### Case Service Expenditures (FFY 2000)

Other	\$ 8,066,907
College	3,912,567
Rehab Engineering	2,490,091
Job Placement Services	2,442,522
Transportation	2,404,065
Public Vocational School	2,322,578
Supported Employment	2,208,477
Diagnostic	\$ 2,091,568
Other Training	1,460,614
Occupational Equipment Purchase	1,394,248
Restoration	1,371,222
Interpreter / Reader Services	1,214,022
Maintenance	1,040,780
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$32,419,660</b>

### Other Expenditures (FFY 2000)

Services from Private Vendors	\$ 19,667,127
Services to Consumers	17,751,947
Services from Other Public Vendors	11,978,206
Administration	6,589,114
Innovation and Expansion	5,340,620
Services from Private Community Rehab Programs	4,823,605
Services for Groups of Individuals ( <i>other than BEP</i> )	1,468,678
Services from Public Community Rehab Programs	1,017,501
Business Enterprise Program ( <i>BEP</i> )	535,063
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 69,171,861</b>

### Caseload by Disability Type (FFY 2000)



*DVR served 37,152 consumers in 2000.*





## Where Do We Go From Here?

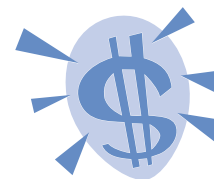
Looking ahead to the next phase of our journey, there are many things to anticipate with excitement and optimism.

### Funding

Under the leadership of the Department of Workforce Development Secretary Jennifer Reinert, DVR received emergency funding from the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Finance Committee. This \$500,000 drew down more than \$1.8 million in matching federal funds.

This allowed DVR to begin serving 1,000 of the applicants with the most significant disabilities who were on the waiting list.

Governor Scott McCallum's biennial budget proposal also included an additional \$3 million in funding for DVR. This request was successful in the Wisconsin Legislature.



*Additional funding is offering new opportunities for individuals who were previously on the DVR waiting list.*

### Strategic Reform Task Force

Secretary Reinert appointed the *DVR Strategic Reform Task Force* to address issues raised by the Legislative Audit Bureau in its October 2000 report. The Task Force is comprised of individuals from statewide advocacy groups, DVR consumers, financial management experts, private business representatives, DVR managers / staff and vocational rehabilitation counselors and educators.

The Task Force made recommendations and DVR formed seven internal workgroups to begin implementing those recommendations. The workgroups are focusing on:

- Case service allocation.
- Case management practices.
- Forecasting caseloads and expenditures.
- Staff training.
- Third-party cooperative agreements and other contracts.
- Internal auditing.
- Counselor recruitment and retention.



*DVR workgroups are taking action on issues that will help ensure top-quality service for DVR consumers in the future.*

*The workgroups will report to the DVR Strategic Reform Task Force throughout 2001, providing periodic progress updates.*

## Staff Training

The addition of new training personnel is helping DVR teach new skills to management and direct-service staff. Key areas, such as agency alignment, performance management and skill enhancement for counselors will be a top focus of these efforts over the next 12 to 18 months.



*DVR employees are learning new skills to enhance efficiency and service quality.*





State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development

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